

is claimed that this would inject quality' and 'expertise' into bank management. It can be argued equally plausibly that the outcome would be to open the floodgates of corruption, nepotism and favouritism and to breed discontentment and frustration among bank personnel.

Instead of a sweeping survey of all

manner of developments affecting banks, one wonders whether in future IBA chairmen would not do better to concentrate on one or two major policy issues or problems and deal them threadbare. The issues liaised are then more likely to become the subject of public debate and compel attention from the concerned authorities.

during the visits, as indeed in all its activities, the Commission depended on government personnel and machinery. "How does one hope", Sadgopal asks, "to gain a critical appreciation of the working conditions of schools and teachers by using the government apparatus in investigating the government-financed or government-controlled structures of education?"

EDUCATION

Ideology and Advantage National Commission on Teachers

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THE National Commission on Teachers was appointed by the government in February 1983 to review the condition of the teaching profession both at the school and the college level. The two levels offer so sharp a contrast in working conditions and status in our country that the government saw fit to divide the Commission's work between two separate groups of experts, labelled simply as NCT-I and NCT-II. NCT-I, which was to look at school teachers, consisted of 19 members, and NCT-II of twenty, both groups sharing Kireet Joshi, Educational Advisor to the Ministry of Education, as Member-Secretary. It is interesting that NCT-I had no representative from a university department of education. On the other hand, this commission had several members who are employed as bureaucrats either in a state or at the Centre, and several others belonging to elite public schools. The composition of NCT-I was more homogeneous, in the sense that most of its members were either university professors or Vice-Chancellors. Despite the bifurcation of work, the two commissions were given the same terms of reference, covering a wide range of philosophical, financial, academic, and political issues. Both commissions were expected to submit reports within one year from the date of the first meeting. Neither commission has done so. The Chairman of NCT-I, D P Chattopadhyaya (ex-Minister of Commerce) announced at a press conference in February that an interim report of his commission will be out in a month's time. At the time when the interim report was awaited, one of NCT-I's members, Anil Sadgopal, announced his resignation. The interim report did not appear.

In his letter of resignation, Sadgopal has raised a number of issues per-

taining to the manner in which the Commission functioned. "I wish to emphasise", he says, "that my resignation is basically on the issue of the consistent use by the Commission of unscientific, *ad hoc* and populist methods in collecting data and in analysing problems". He refers to an earlier letter to the Chairman in which he had drawn attention to the Commission's casual attitude towards rational procedures for collecting information. The 'unscientific' methodology of the Commission is illustrated best by the 40-page questionnaire distributed among a meagre 0.25 per cent of the population of teachers in the country. Less than 3,000 (or about 0.075 per cent) of the country's 4 million teachers responded. Preliminary analysis of the first 1,000 returned questionnaires shows that only 77 out of these were sent by primary school teachers who form the majority of the total population of teachers.

The problems posed by a highly inadequate sample and poor rate of return of the Commission's main instrument of data collection (which was printed in just two languages, Hindi and English) were further compounded by the use of biased language in questions and the absence of any logical links among its various sections. Sadgopal alleges that the haphazardness of the questionnaire was matched by the manner in which the Commission arranged its visits to state capitals. No rational planning was made to decide which capitals would be chosen. Sadgopal says that these visits were made to create an impression of democratic consultation and genuine survey of people's needs whereas it was obvious that by sitting in a capital city the Commission would come no closer to the vast hinterland where the problems of education are most severe. And

Apart from methodological and procedural issues, Sadgopal mentions the lack of perspective or framework in the Commission's functioning. One of the things the Commission could have done in order to evolve a historical perspective was to analyse the reasons why the recommendations made by the Education Commission 17 years ago have remained unimplemented. The Commission disregarded this suggestion. It paid no attention to the need to work out a system for dealing with conflicts of opinion within its own members. Its approach in the face of such conflicts was "one of compromises and adjustments amongst various personal, sectional or class interests, so that all may be pleased". Even in simpler matters such as maintaining minutes of various meetings, the Commission ignored Sadgopal's repeated pleas for accuracy.

Sadgopal's resignation shows how difficult it is for citizens who are not functionaries of the state to share with it the tasks of evolving policy and taking decisions. It is precisely to involve a larger set of individuals rather than merely the bureaucracy that the government appoints commissions such as the NCT. The bureaucracy — both in terms of its representatives and its culture dominates in such forums, defeating the very purpose of the presence of outsiders. The use of scientific procedures that Sadgopal demanded could hardly be said to be a part of the culture of bureaucracy in India. Indeed, it is a rare case when even the available social scientific information is used by the government to take decisions. Do political considerations hamper the government in using such information? Sadgopal's letter of resignation indicates that political considerations in educational policy-making are in fact ideological, not merely matters of responding to the pressure of this or that lobby. Had Sadgopal stayed on in the Commission a little longer, he might have accumulated richer knowledge of how broad ideological preferences actually translate into distribution of advantages.